DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 126 455 CS 002 818

AUTHOR Horn, Vida
TITLE Children's Books in Australia.
INSTITUTION Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, Tehran (Iran).; Iranian Commission for UNESCO, Tehran.; United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, Paris (France).
PUB DATE 75
NOTE 27p.; Paper presented at the Conference on Children's Literature in the Service of International Understanding and Peaceful Co-operation (Tehran, May 15-21, 1975); Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Australian Literature; *Childrens Books; *Childrens Literature; Conference Reports; Cultural Exchange; Cultural Interrelationships; *Global Approach; *Publications

ABSTRACT

This report, given at a special meeting held in Tehran, describes children's literature in Australia, discussing specifically the background of this literature (the country and early children's books); various influences on the literature, such as the Children's Book Council and children's and school libraries; present-day publishing, including statistics and translations; books published today, including myths and legends, picture books, early stories, and fiction for older children; and future trends. A brief bibliography is provided. (JM)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED126455

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN THE SERVICE OF INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING AND PEACEFUL CO-OPERATION

ORGANIZED BY THE
INSTITUTE FOR THE INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS
IN COOPERATION WITH UNESCO AND THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO IN IRAN

15-21 MAY 1975 , TEHRAN

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

5008 S/S

Children's Literature in the Service of

International Understanding and Peaceful Co-operation

Tehran, 15-21 May 1975

Children's books in Australia

by

Vida Horn

Contents

Background:
- The country
- Early children's books

Influence on children's literature:
- The Children's Book Council
- Children's libraries
- School libraries

Present-day publishing:
- Children's book statistics
- Representation in select lists
- Translation

Australian children's books today:
- Myths and legends
- picture books
- Early stories
- Fiction for older children

Future trends

CHILDREN'S BOOKS IN AUSTRALIA

Background. The first British settlers in Australia were convicts and their gaolers.

They came because they were sent. The shouts of command, the volley of fire to salute the raising of the flag, frightened the green parrakeets that took flight through the thin and as yet un-named leaves. We have been trying to charm them back ever since.

The soldiers, sailors and convicts -

"True patriots all; for be it understood,
We left our country for our country's good" -

came with folk tales and songs already shaped, to a land that seemed to them untouched and ownerless. It was indeed without an owner. Rather it possessed its people, for whom each boulder, tree and creature had a name and a place in an understood pattern. Our first literature, the conscientious reports despatched to London by the army and naval officers, tried to make the new land comprehensible to those at home the width of the world away. Perhaps, too, those reports helped them to feel that they had come to understand the country that many of them did not wish to leave when later they might.

So most of our writing, in poetry or prose, for adults or children, has sought to comprehend and possess the pattern that we believe we have woven. We write almost obsessively about the countryside, yet most of us live in towns and always have done. We try to explain our comparatively new order of things to recent arrivals from

civilizations already ancient. We use as decorations on tourist souvenirs or we place on exhibition in museums the most sacred and secret images of our Aboriginal predecessors, and think that we honour them by so doing. We are still exploring, in poetry and prose, a land millions of years old, whose coasts and rivers and ranges were charted and mapped a bare two hundred years ago.

The country. What have we learned about our country, what do our writers seek to re-create for our children? These are some of the facts forming a background to the events that happen in the books:

Australia is the only island continent, and the only continent ruled by a single govenment. It measures 4,000 km from east to west and 3,200 km from north to south. It is more than half as large again as Europe (excluding the USSR). More than one third of its area of approximately 7,700 km^2 lies above the Tropic of Capricorn. Within this area there is a diversity of landscape and climate.

Most of the mountain ranges are close to the coast. Along the east coast, the mountains in the northern half may be rich with tropical rain-forest. The highest mountains in the south-east are cloaked with snow for a large part of the year. Beyond the ranges lie flat fertile plains, and in the centre and the west are deserts. About one third of the continent is so dry that it is uninhabitable.

The land bridges that linked Australia to Asia vanished in prehistoric times, isolating the flora and fauna from the rest of the world. Nearly half the mammals are marsupials, which rear their young in

a pouch. There are no large dangerous animals. Early settlers found no plants or animals suitable for domestication or agriculture. The Australian Aborigines, the earlier inhabitants of the country, migrated from south-east Asia some 30,000 years ago. They were semi-nomadic hunters and food gatherers, and did not raise crops or domesticate animals. They lived in small tribes, without chieftains. There was a complex system of social organization, both within a tribe and between tribes. Their religion was an integral part of daily life, and its rich culture of ceremonies, myths, paintings and rock engravings grew a close identification with the land and all its creatures.

The existence of the northern part of the continent was known to Asian, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese navigators, but the coastline was harsh and apparently lacking in any products suitable for trade. In 1770, the richer east coast was charted from south to north by Captain James Cook, who claimed the land for Britain. In 1788 a party of about one thousand soldiers, sailors and convicts landed where Sydney now stands. Later, free settlers migrated to the colony also.

Exploration had begun even before 1800, and new settlements were soon established in the rich pasture and farming lands beyond the coastal ranges. The discovery of gold in 1851 attracted people from all over the world. Many of them stayed to farm the land when the gold-rushes had ended, and gradually the Aborigines lost their tribal lands to farmers and graziers.

In 1901 the six States joined together in a federation to become the Commonwealth of Australia, and a national capital was established

at Canberra.

Australia is still an agricultural country, but there has also been a tremendous growth in mineral production and in secondary industries of all types. The population is just over thirteen million; nearly two and a half million people have come as migrants since 1945. Australia is the most highly urbanized nation in the world; 64.5% of its population live in the six State capitals, and a futther 21% in other large towns and cities. Over 75% of all newcomers to Australia settle in the State capitals.

Early children's books. After the official reports came journals, memoirs and some easily forgotten poetry. But soon the books about the new country included some for children:

The earliest children's books about Australia date from the beginning of the nineteenth centry, and were usually published overseas. An exception, regarded as the first Australian children's book, is A mother's offering to her children, by Lady Gordon Bremer. This was published in Sydney in 1841. Other books were written by popular overseas authors looking for a different setting. The voluminous peter Parley included two books on Australia in his series of instructional books in the 1830's. G.A. Henty and Horatio Alger were two of the many authors who despatched interpid heroes to conquer new dangers in the Australian bush.

Adventure stories, religious and moral tales, family stories, bushland fantasies, animal stories and poetry were included among the

early Australian books published in Australia and Britain. Many of them were obviously intended for an overseas market, as the strangeness of scenery, plants and animals was emphasised. Illustrations were often by artists who were unfamiliar with their subjects and who relied for information on inaccurate descriptions.

About one third of the best-known Australian children's books published before 1900 were produced by local publishers. There was not a big enough readership to support a flourishing children's publishing industry. Australian firms had difficulty, too, in competing with established and popular British authors, in Australia as well as in Britain. Printers lacked the equipment to produce work of top quality and, though artists had begun to emerge who depicted the Australian landscape and the local political scene with verve and understanding, none of them turned to the field of children's picture books.

It was not until the last few years of the nineteenth century that children's books of any merit were written by authors who lived in this country permanently and regarded themselves as Australian. Two of these books are still stocked by most children's libraries. K. Langloh Parker's re-telling of Aboriginal myths and legends continues to be among the best in a growing list of titles. Ethel Turner's vivid story of a Sydney family, Seven little Australians, (1894) has recently won new popularity as a result of an excellent television serial production.

The spirit of nationalism that led the six States to federation was reflected in literature at all levels. More children's books began

to be written and published locally, and the Australian setting was no longer regarded by the authors as a curiousity. A few of the many books published between 1900 and 1945 are still in print but of these only Norman Lindsay's The magic pudding is assured of a place in Australian children's literature. The hilarious adventures of the Society of puddin'-Owners and the villainous pack of pudding thieves are related in story, verse and lively illustrations.

Influences on children's literature. Since 1945 Australian children's literature has matured as a result of the same kind of benevolent influences that may be noted in American and British writing at an earlier period.

Children's Book Council. First place must undoubtedly go to the group of dedicated enthusiasts who in 1945 established the forerunner of the Children's Book Council of Australia. Beginning in New South Wales, it now has branches in most States and is currently setting up an Australian headquarters in Canberra. Its original aim of encouraging the reading and distribution of children's books is still implicit in all the Council's work, but its influence and activities have grown far beyound the dreams of its founders.

Through an annual Children's Book Week the Council promotes displays in bookshops, schools, libraries, shopping centres and other public places throughout the country. It arranges book reviews, interviews with children's authors and illustrators and similar publicity in all the media.

The Children's Book Council publishes a quarterly journal,

Reading Time. A typical issue includes three or four short articles, reviews of approximately 100 books and a page of news items. All Australian children's books worthy of critical attention are reviewed, an average of fourteen per issue. Reviews are not necessarily favourable.

State branches of the Council carry out additional activities, such as organization of seminars and publication of book lists. The most widely distributed book lists are those published by the Children's Book Council of Victoria.[2]

The most significant influence exercised by the Children's Book Council of Australia is probably in their award for the Book of the Year, awarded since 1946, and the picture Book of the Year, awarded since 1956. A new award, Best Illustrated Children's Book of the Year, was made for the first time in 1974. This award is made through the Children's Book Council by the Visual Arts Board of the Australian Council for the Arts. Any award may be withheld if the judges so decide.

Annoucement of the awards introduces Children's Book Week in July each year, ensuring maximum publicity for author, illustrator and publisher. Whilst it would be difficult to prove that the awards have actually raised the standard of Australian children's literature, they have certainly had an outstanding influence in directing both public and critical attention to children's books and reading. The contribution made by the Children's Book Council to Australian literature was recognized by the Australian Government in 1974, when it made a grant to the council of $5,000 through the Literature Board of the Australian Council for the Arts.

This year, 44 books were submitted by 14 publishers for judging in the awards.

Children's libraries. The first survey of library service in Australia the Munn-Pitt Report published in 1935, stated that judge by overseas standards (i.e.British and American) there was not an acceptable children's public library in Australia.[3] Lending libraries were for the most part outdated schools of arts and mechanics' institutes, which the Report described as "cemeteries of dead and forgotten books". A later report by Lionel McColvin, in 1947, showed little obvious improvement.[4]

The McColvin Report did, however, serve as a catalyst and by the early 1950's all States had Library Acts authorizing the operation of public libraries by local authorities (i.e. town and shire councils).

The acts also established State Library Boards, whose responsibilities included the promotion of public library service and distribution of State subsidy to local authorities operating libraries. The development of service in individual States has been uneven, depending on a complex inter-meshing of historical, political and geographical factors. Administration varies from the highly centralized, as in Western Australia, to the locally autonomous, as in New South Wales and Victoria.

In all States the importance of children's departments in public libraries has been recognized, though the quality of actual service, particularly in readers' advising, may offer room for considerable improvement. The Tauber report[5] showed that by 1963 the children's library scene had made only partial progress, and, as Anne Pellowski

commented, performance is rather below what appearance suggests. Appearance and performance are, however, both improving. Standards of children's book selection are emphasised in both library schools and in centralized guidance from the children's library officers of State Library Boards. A good Australian children's book is therefore likely to be bought by most of the 620 public libraries in Australia.

For many years the accepted professional qualification for librarieans was the Registration Certificate of the Library Association of Australia. From 1945 this included a paper on work with children and their literature. This Certificate is being repalced by degress and diplomas issued by schools of librarianship in universities and institutes of technology. These all make provision for courses in children's literature, with the University of New South Wales leading the way. Its Department of Librarianship undertakes major bibliographic work on children's and school library materials. The value of this work is recognized by the Australian Advisory Council on Bibliographic Service.

The Children's Libraries Section of the Library Association of Australia was established in 1952. Its official publication, a quarterly newsletter, includes articles on children's literature and on library work with children.[8] It also attempts to evaluate children's book selection aids avaialable to local librarians. A regular and valuable feature is a bibliography of current professional literature. The newsletter does not carry reviews of children's books in order not to compete with Reading Time, which it regards as a companion publication rather than a rival.

In 1964 the Children's Libraries Section sponsored a visit to Australia by professor Sara Fenwick of the University of Chicago. Her report, School and children's libraries in Australia[9] was sympathetic librarians' problems but also indicated shortcomings in service. The Fenwick Report appeared in 1966, and in the same year the Children's Libraries Section published its Standards and objectives for school libraries.[10] The Library Association of Australia includes brief standards for children's libraries in its public Library standards.[11]

School libraries. State Government are also responsible for education, and development of school libraries has therefore been subject to many of the influences that affected public libraries. One notable difference, however, is that since 1969 secondary schoo libraries have received subsidy from the Australian government, which public libraries do not. It seems probable that a similar subsidy will be granted to primary school libraries also.

A survey of the primary school library situation was commissioned in 1972 by the Australian Library promotion Council[12] and while there have been some advances since then the picture has not yet substantially changed. All States offer some form of training in school librarianship, with Victoria leading in its provision of a full-time course for teacher-librarians.

As in public libraries, there is a concern for Australian children's books. The Children's Books Council's award-winning Book of the year is bought by almost every primary and secondary school library in Australia and, as in public libraries, there is also a welcome for

good nonfiction on Australian subjects.

Present day publishing. The principal change that has occurred in Australian publishing in the last five years has been the purchase of many local firms by outside interests. The results are probably similar to those in other countries.

The Australian experience has been that when the purchasing firm is not specifically concerned with publishing, there is likely to be a decline in publishing standards and efficiency. When an overseas publisher takes over an Australian firm, the outcome depends on the extent to which the local firm is allowed to continue in its former policies. On the whole, it seems likely that the advantage of increased access of Australian books to overseas markets will be offset by al loss of the individuality that usually distinguishes the small publishing firm.

The index of publishers in the 1974 edition of Australian books in print[13] lists some 335 firms, but this figure includes agents for overseas publishers and many associations and committees whose primary concern is not publishing. The Australian Book publishers' Association received statistical returns for 1974 from only 56 of the publishers listed. Of these, fewer than 40 are general publishers producing children's books regularly.

Children's book statistics. The A.B.P.A. statistics show that 119 children's with an average print run of 14,846 were published in Australia in 1974. This compares with a previous figure of 154 titles with an average print run of 17,694. There was an increase of reprint children's titles to 243 (print run 24,210) from 211 (print run 27,821). These

statistics give only a partial picture of children's book publishing. They do not include figures from Angus & Robertson, Australia's senior publishing house, which has withdrawn from the A.B.P.A. The print run figure of 14,846 is high in comparison with that of 4,768 for adult fiction or 4,910 for general literature, but the children's book figure includes cheap editions produced for sale through supermarkets and newsagents.

Representatation in select lists. The most useful general statistics on Australian books for children are available from the lists published by the Children's Book Council of Victoria. In 1970 the Council published the fourth edition of their select list, Australian children's books.[14] This consisted of 192 titles covering fiction (including some adult novels) for all age groups, history, travel, biography, Australian Aborigines, nature study, architecture, art and poetry. About 80% of the non-fiction books were not produced specifically for children. Of the 38 publishers represented, 15 were previously Australian-owned; of these 15, only 7 are now Australian-owned.

This was the last separate listing of Australian books produced by the Council. In 1973 the sixth edition of a general list, Books for children,[15] was published. The selection committee decided that Australian children's books had now reached international stature and no longer needed to be judged by a different standard. They also decided to eliminate adult fiction suitable for young people, and most non-fiction.

This list, consisting of a total of 680 titles drawn from British, American and Australian books of fiction, folktales, poetry, plays and first books for younger readers, includes 58 Australian titles. Of the 19 publishers represented, only 2 are Australian-owned firms. In any current list of Australian children's books in print, the firm most strongly represented is Angus & Robertson. Oxford University press has been the leader in fiction for older children. The locally-owned firm of Rigby has produced many attractive non-fiction books and is also developing a range of fiction titles. The influence of enthusiastic and knowledgeable children's editors is seen in the curren publishing by the Australian branches of Hodder & Stoughton and William Collins. Recent picture books collins have been welcomed in a section where local publishing has not been extensive.

Translations. Although Australia has drawn her recent immigrants from all over Europe and the Middle East, virtually no translations of children's books are published in Australia, and we rely on importing translations produced by British and American publishers. Australian children's books are frequently reviewed favourably in British children's book reviewing journals, and many of our best-known writers of today have been published in American editions.[16]

In 1974, 13 Australian publishers participated in the Bologna Children's Book Fair with a display of approximately 150 books. It is hoped that the numerous enquiries about publications on display will lead to more translations of Australian material into other languages.

In the last ten years there have been translations of books by popular authors such as H.F. Brinsmead, Nan Chauncy, Mary Patchett, Joan Phipson, Ivan Southall, Eleanor Spence, Colin Thiele and Patricia Wrightson. It is interesting to note that only one of these authors has not produced a book honoured with a children's Book Council award. At least 92 translations of 46 titles by these authors have been published in a total of fifteen languages. There is an edition in German of 33 of the 46 titles. Dutch, Norwegian and Swedish are each represented by nine titles.

Australian librarians would particularly welcome more translations in Italian, Greek and Serbo-Croat, to provide a bridge for children of migrant parents.

Australian children's books today. It is noticeable that in almost all Australian children's books the setting is firmly local, Very few authors have written historical or contemporary stories set in another country; there are few works of non-fiction that do not deal with a specifically Australian subject. If the path to peaceful co-operation between countries begins with understanding at an individual level, I suggest that an insight into Australia may be gained through a reading of the best of our present-day writers.

Myths and legends. The early settlers of Australia came from a country which had had a comparatively high literacy rate for centuries. Their folk tales were British, so that our archetypes are seen through European eyes though they may have features shaped by the Australian

countryside.

Our liveliest folk tradition is therefore one of bush ballads - European folk tunes to which Australian words have been fitted - and tall tales - Crooked Mick of the Speewah is first cousin to Paul Bunyon and Pecos Bill. Between the folk song and the book there was no strongly developed intermediate stage of folk tales, so Australian children's literature lacks the earlier oral tradition which is the backbone of many national literatures.

Instead, we have borrowed the myths and legends of the Australian Aborigines, whose creation myths seek to explain the origin of familiar birds, animals and natural phenomena. These myths are so deeply embedded in their own culture that they may seem sparse and inaccessible to a European. Roland Robinson's Wandjina: children of the Dreamtime (Jacaranda, 1968) is valuable for the poetic insight it gives into some of the myths of the Northern Territory. In recent years there have also been re-tellings by Aborigines of their own legends. There are two outstanding collections:

> Stradbroke dreamtime brings to life stories of the children of Aboriginal poet Kath Walker, together with traditional tales which she heard as a child. (Angus & Robertson, 1972).
>
> Dijugurba: tales from the Spirit Time, was written and illustrated by young Aborigines at a teachers' training college in Darwin. (Australian National University, 1974).

Picture books. A valued publication is The giant devil dingo,

a splendidly illustrated picture-book by Dick Roughsey. (Collins, 1973). This is one of the few Australian picture-books of distinction. The award for the picture Book of the year has been made only seven times in the last 20 years, but three of these awards have been made since 1971. The lack of picture books has been due partly to publishing economics, partly to a lack of artists who had been accustomed as children as children to the world of picture books, and partly to a lack of children's editors to foster the publication of picture books of quality.

Where European and American illustrators have used folk tales for their text, Australian illustrators turn to the popular poet A.B. Paterson,'the Banjo of the Bush'. His poems are the basis of three books:

Waltzing Matilda; illustrated by Desmond Digby with dramatically sombre pictures.(Collins, 1970).

Mulga Bill's vicycle; illustrated by Kilmeny and Deborah Niland. (Collins, 1973). Humourous and fastmoving action in both text and pictures.

The man from Ironbark; illustrated by Quentin Hole. (Collins, 1974). Picture Book of the year for 1975.

A companion from Aboriginal legends for Dick Roughsey's Giant devil dingo is The bunyip from Berkeley's Creek. (Longman, Young Books 1973), Ron Brooks's illustrations won the picture Book of the year award in 1974, and the quality of Jenny Wagner's text was singled out for particular praise by the judges.

Early stories. The new picture books lead on to a small array of good

titles for early readers. The most attractive of these are from a young author, Christabel Mattingley. Her affectionate studies of country children, such as Queen of the wheat castles and The windmill at Magpie Creek, recognize both the hazards and the pleasures of farm life in the outback. (Brockhampton; other titles by Hamish Hamilton). The lucky stone, by Stella Sammon, is a sensitive story of Aboriginal life today, poised between a tribal life that is rapidly vanishing and an urban life that is still strange. (Methuen, 1969).

Fiction for older children. The themes and attitudes that have dominated the Australian self-image appear at most levels of our literature. They are also evident in children's books, particularly in stories for older readers.

Underlying the subject and the plot is frequently the theme of exploring and understanding - oneself, the country and man's place in it or the tensions that underlie human relationships within a social context. There is also an expression of a great need to belong and to feel accepted. In the best books, these themes are developed with sympathy and strength, and are frequently leavened with humour.

The development of individual genres of children's literature is covered in detail by H.M. Saxby in A history of Australian children's literature, 1941-1970. Critical essays on individual authors, illustrators and types of fiction also appear frequently in Children's libraries newsletter and Reading time. These are all essential material for anyone wishing to investigate Australian children's literature more thoroughly. Any consideration of the contemporary scene must begin with the

work of Nan Chauncy, whose first book was published in 1948. The Tasmanian background, unfamiliar to many Australians, was the firmly-established setting of all her work. Her early books centre on the Lorenny family, English settlers coming to terms with the "rough-wrought mountains of Tasmania" and establishing a home in the bush, where they feel, in the end, that they truly belong. Most of these books are available in American and German editions. In all, her books are represented in twelve languages. Australian critics agree that her outstanding book is Tangara (American title: The secret friends. Oxford) It deals with one of the most shameful events in Australian history, the deliberate and brutal destruction of the Tasmanian Aborigines by white settlers. In Tangara, a green shell necklace leads Lexie into the past, to her ancestor Rita and Rita's Aboriginal friend Merrina. Ultimately, the loving sympathy between the black and the white girls cancels out some of the hideous cruelty inflicted on one race by another. This is a book that could appeal to a much wider audience than its Australian readers.

Eleanor Spence's family stories are all centred around the theme of the realization of a full personality, and usually appeal mainly to girls. Her most popular books is an historical story, Lillypilly Hill (Oxford) This is the story of an English family who inherit a country property in New South Wales at the end of the century. The reconciliation of the unwilling members of the family to the dauntingly strange land is achieved by the energetic, out-of-door Harriet.

Two of Eleanor Spence's books recognize that the structure of employment in Australia means that a family may have to move from one town to another. A Book of the year award, The green place (Oxford), is the story of a family whose father operates a children's train at fair-grounds. The elder daughter, Lesley, dreams of a permanent home where she can live like the laurel, "Rooted in one dear perpetual place".

More recent, and with a stronger interest for boys, is The nothing-place (Oxford). The friendship that grows between the cheerful, out-going Shane and the partially deaf Glen has as its background one of the anonymous suburbs that have spread rapidly around all Australian cities.

The best-known Australian children's writer today is undoubtedly Ivan Southall. He has been described as "the most talked-about and written-about Australian author that children read".[18] His work has been criticised for its lack of humour, and it has also been claimed that his themes and techniques belong in adult rather than children's literature.

Certainly his major books place children under enormous stress, and frequently require them to shoulder emotional responsibilities that the adult characters are incapable of bearing. He is, however, also one of the most popular authors in school and children's libraries. It is obvious from children's comments that many of his readers respond to the tensions present in all Southall's books, as well as to their action and excitement.

It is difficult to select individual titiles for comment. Mention

must be made of Hills End, Ash Road and To the Wild Sky (all Angus & Robertson). These three novels have in common children pitted against the elemental dangers of water, fire and air.

A good introduction to later books is Over the top (Methuen), which describes Perry's frightening journey at night through the bush to bring help to his parents. Ivan Southall's books mark a departure from "children's books" into "novels for children". Representing as they do the stresses and ensions of contemporary life, they could refer to children in any urbanized society.

The fourth writer whose work occupies a major position in Australian children's writing today is patricia Wrightson. Where Southall's books command a sometimes unwilling critical respect, hers are more often mentioned with deep affection. She has developed from family adventure stories, dating from the early 1959's, to an examination of the reconcilliation of Aboriginal myths with contemporary life.

This theme was foreshadowed in her excellent book, The Rocks of Honey (Angus & Robertson [O.P.]; Puffin). This is a sensitive yet never sombre story of the friendship between a white boy and a part-Aboriginal boy who learns to accept both parts of his inheritance.

The book best known to an overseas audience is probably " I own the racecourse!" (Hutchinson). Here, Patricia Wrightson explores the world of an intellectually retarded boy and the group of friends who seek to protect him in his encounters with the bewildering behaviour of adults.

This book, like Down to earth and An older kind of magic (both Hutchinson), is set in Sydney. The three form a useful contrast to the books with country settings which have made up a large part of literature for both adults and children.

In An older kind of magic and The Nargun and the stars (Hutchinson), Patricia Wrightson introduces creatures from Aboriginal myths and legends in the hope that this will people our contemporary landscape with a magic more appropriate than the elves and fairies of European folklore.

These four writers are the chief, but by no means the only, children's authors producing work of quality in Australia today. It is hoped that there will be some opportunity during the Conference for more detailed discussion.

Future trends. The Children's Book Council of Australia announced its awards early this year. The judges' comments made it clear that, in a year when there was no entry from Ivan Southall, Eleanor Spence or Particia Wrightson, no major new talent had emerged either. They deplored the number of books based on temporarily fashionable themes rather than on deeply felt convictions, and mentioned regretfully the lack of books with an urban setting.

Their most stinging criticism was reserved for poor quality book design and production. It was evident that this prevented Ruth Park's highly commended Callie's Castle (Angus & Robertson) from gaining the Book of the year Award. The need for competent book editors, working with talented designers was emphasised. American and British experience has

shown that this is the first step towards a generally high standard in a nation's children's literature. The growth of school and children's libraries has already fostered the production of children's books.

As the market expands, we are likely to see the appointment of more children's editors. Though Australian publishing has been dominated by outside interests in the last few years, there have been a few firms established, one of which is strongly committed to the publication of children's books.

A promising sign is the increased production of picture books and stories for younger readers. This, I hope, is where we shall see more development within the next few years. Perhaps, too, we may hope for books that celebrate the many countries from which our migrant children come. Whatever the subjects or settings, it is certain that there are appreciative readers for as many good children's books as our writers and artists can create. If they are faithful to their Australian sources, they may perhaps bring some understanding of the country and its people to an international audience.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Reading time: quarterly, Sydney, Children's Book Council of Australia.

2. Books for children. 6th ed. Melbourne, Children's Book Council of Victoria, 1973.

3. Munn, R. Australian Libraries, by R. Munn and F. R. Pitt. Melbourne, Australian Council for Educational Research, 1935.

4. McColvin, L. R. Public libraries in Australia, Melbourne, Melbourne University press for the Australian Council for Educational Research, 1947.

5. Tauber, M.P. Resources of Australian libraries. Canberra, Australian Advisory Council on Bibliographical Services, 1963.

6. Pellowski, A. The world of children's literature. New York, Bowker, 1968. p.339

7. McGrath, L.H. "Report of AACORS special activities in school and children's libraries: 1973," Children's libraries newsleter, Vol. 10, No. 1, February 1974, PP.22-24

8. Children's libraries newsletter: quarterly, Sydney, Library Association of Australia, Children's Libraries Section.

9. Fenwick, S. I. School and children's libraries in Australia. Melbourne, Cheshire for the Library Association of Australia, 1966.

10. Library Association of Australia, Children's Libraries Section. Standards and objectives for school libraries. Melbourne, Cheshire for The Association, 1966.

11. Library Association of Australia. Committee on Standards for public Libraries, Interim minimum standards for public libraries. Sydney, The Association, 1972.

12. Chhen, D. Primary school libraries. Melbourne, Australian Library promotion Council, 1972.

13. Australian books in print, 1974. Melbourne, Thorpe. Annual publication).

14. Australian children's books. 4th ed. Melbourne, Children's Book Council of Victoria, 1970.

15. Books for children. 6th. op.cit.

16. Coughlan, M. "The reception of Australian children's books by American Critics and children" Children's libraries newsletter, Vol. 6, No. 4, November 1970, PP. 7-9